



San Diego County DPLU News

Summer 2011

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Calendar

Nov. 9 Board of Supervisors Workshop: Property Specific Requests

From the Director

Hello everyone!

Welcome to the summer edition of our DPLU newsletter. We have a lot to tell you about, starting with the General Plan Update, which was approved by the County Board of Supervisors Aug. 3. We also have news about our building permit inspection process, impact fee deferrals, our award-winning cellular tower permitting process and more.

As always, DPLU is striving to be the best land use department we can be.

Until next time,

- Eric Gibson, Director, Department of Planning and Land Use

Advance Planning

General Plan Update

Board of Supervisors Approve GP Update, Direct Staff to Hold November Workshop.

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 Aug. 3 to approve the General Plan Update, the first sweeping upgrade in 30 years of the County's growth and development plans.

The Board also voted 3-2 to direct County staff to hold a Board workshop Nov. 9 to provide a comprehensive review of property specific requests submitted during the General Plan Update hearings.

General plans guide community development. Generally, they set the philosophy and policies that determine what gets built where.

The General Plan Update represents a change from the County's old general plan in part by shifting an estimated 20 percent of anticipated future development to western unincorporated communities with established infrastructure such as roads, fire protection and sewer services.

Benefits of the plan when compared to the previous plan include:

- Accommodating a roughly 41 percent increase in population in unincorporated communities while still cutting projected growth in the old general plan by 15 percent.
- Cutting potential greenhouse gas emissions by 550,000 metric tons a day by reducing new road construction by 780 lane miles and eliminating up to three million vehicle trips a day.

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Advance Planning

Did You Know?

That the history of General Plans in California dates back to 1927?

That was the year that the state Legislature authorized local governments — cities and counties — to form planning commissions and directed those commissions to create “master plans” for their communities.

In 1937, California started requiring all cities and counties to adopt master plans, making it one of the first states in the U.S. to do so.

In 1955, California started requiring local governments to prepare specific “elements” of study in master plans, that today include: land use, circulation, conservation, housing, open space, noise and safety.

In 1965, California officially changed the name of master plans to “general plans.”

View the Advance Planning website to get more information at:
www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/advance/index.html or
www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/gpupdate

- Reducing wildfire threats by locating more growth closer to existing fire stations.
- Reducing potential direct effects of development on biological habitat.

The General Plan Update was developed with broad public input from developers, business owners, environmentalists, farmers, homeowners, landowners and renters.

For more information, please see:

[General Plan Update Fact Sheet](#)

[General Plan Update Website](#)

Policy and Ordinance Development

Board of Supervisors Directs DPLU to Draft Potential Tiered Ordinance for Horse Facilities

County supervisors voted unanimously July 13 to direct DPLU staff to draft a “Tiered” ordinance that would improve the County’s existing regulations for horse-related facilities. The Board also voted to allocate \$350,000 for the project’s required environmental studies. The purpose of the action is to protect and promote horse-related operations in the unincorporated county. DPLU staff said the required environmental studies could take 18 months to 24 months to complete, at which time they would bring the proposed tiered ordinance back to the Board for its consideration. For questions about the proposed ordinance, contact Carl Stiehl at carl.stieh@sdcounty.ca.gov.

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Did You Know?

That one of the County's most important and overlooked public safety services is DPLU's building inspection program?

The program protects all of us by having County experts check buildings while they are being built — to make sure that the homes, businesses and buildings in which we live, work and play are safe. Building permits and inspections can help protect people from catastrophe, from making sure that faulty wiring won't create fires, to ensuring that buildings are structurally sound enough to resist earthquake damage.

Just click on the picture above to watch a County video and get more information about the inspection program!

Important Building Division Telephone Numbers

Building Offices: (858) 694-2960

Toll Free: (800) 411-0017

2003, 2007 Wildfire Survivors:

(858) 694-3876

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Building Division News

County Supervisors Extend Impact Fee Deferral

The County Board of Supervisors in July unanimously approved a two-year extension of the action they took in 2009 to help the building industry weather the recession — letting them put off paying transportation, parks, drainage and sewer impact fees until they finish building their projects. The fee deferral applies to residential tract developments and commercial projects and is a voluntary program. Builders are ordinarily required to pay the impact fees when they begin building and carry those debts until they can sell homes and developments. Deferring the impact fees until projects are sold or homes are occupied can provide builders a financial boost that can allow them to start building projects they might otherwise delay, particularly during the economic recovery. DPLU estimates that between April 2009 and April 2011, builders and homeowners have been able to defer approximately \$3.1 million in fees, with an average deferral time of 361 days.

Board Approves New County Building Code

The newest County Building Code — which is designed to make sure people are safe inside and around the buildings in which they live, work, shop and play — was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in April.

The new County code was based, with minor improvements, upon the new State Building Standards Codes that is renewed every three years. The State's 2010 code included a first-ever California Residential Code and an update of the California Green Building Code the state introduced in 2009. The new Residential Code was created to simplify residential building standards for homebuilders by taking all the code provisions that apply to houses, townhouses and accessory structures out of the Building Code and putting them all in one book. Another new item in the codes this year is that all new residences must have carbon monoxide detectors, in addition to smoke detectors.

Top Grades, Safe Homes

In 2009, DPLU's building codes and enforcement system received top grades from the Insurance Services Office (ISO), showing that San Diego County homes are among the safest in the state. The ISO is an independent rating/advisory organization that serves the property/casualty insurance industry. The ISO's report said the San Diego County's top grades showed that it not only had rigorous codes, but that it used highly qualified and trained staff to strictly enforce them, which creates safer buildings.

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DPLU's Landscape Ordinance Honored Again

DPLU's Water Conservation in Landscaping Ordinance and Water Efficient Design Manual continued to rack up awards by winning a 2011 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties. The ordinance and design manual were previously honored by the Association of Environmental Professionals last October. The County Board of Supervisors approved the ordinance and design manual in January 2010, after directing DPLU staff to find new ways to improve local water conservation in 2008. The ordinance requires new developments to create and follow water budgets and to use recycled water when possible. The design manual shows landscapers and the public how to create beautiful landscaping while conserving water.

Important Project Planning Links:

- [California Environmental Quality Act \(CEQA\) Flow Chart](#)
- [Conditions of Approval Manual](#)
- [Developer Deposits](#)
- [Discretionary Permits and Application Forms](#)
- [Environmental Impact Report Guidelines](#)
- [Fee Schedule](#)
- [How Much Discretionary Permits Cost; How Much Time they Take](#)
- [Project Issue Resolution](#)

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Project Planning



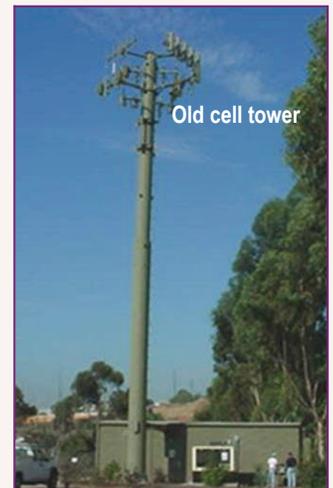
DPLU Earns APA Award for Cell Tower Permit Process

The County and DPLU won a First Place award from the San Diego Chapter of the American Planning Association for creating a permitting process for cellular towers and wireless projects that has pleased both the public and companies — by easing community concerns about aesthetics and safety while speeding up permitting times.

The award recognized a several-year process. That process began when County Supervisors approved a wireless ordinance in 2003 that required cellular companies to make sure new cell towers didn't create eyesores or pose safety hazards in their communities. And it culminated in process improvements that have slashed average permitting times from 1 ½ years to 7 ½ months.

Keys to the improvements included:

- Creating a four-tiered permitting system with clear, reasonable, predictable criteria that everyone understands, from staff to communities and companies.
- Creating guidelines that encourage cell tower projects to artfully and safely "disappear" into their surroundings, skillfully disguising them as fake trees or fake water towers, or hiding them inside flagpoles.
- Fostering a system where companies and communities — through the community groups that represent neighborhoods to the neighbors themselves — work more closely together.
- Creating a centralized County review team dedicated to working on cellular permits.



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Multiple Species Conservation Program



Photo by Marguerite Gregory © California Academy of Sciences

Featured Species: Coast Horned Lizard

There was a time when kids could find this incredible-looking lizard practically anywhere in San Diego County. But these days, the Coast Horned Lizard — which looks like it just crawled off the set of Jurassic Park — is believed to be extinct in nearly 45 percent of its original range, according to the San Diego Natural History Museum. But this cool species is still protected by the South County MSCP Plan. The Coast Horned Lizard is more round than other horned lizards, can grow up to 4 inches in length and has been known to squirt blood from its eyes to distract predators such as coyotes and snakes. Female lizards lay six to 21 eggs from May to June, which then hatch in August and September. Native red ants are the Coast Horned Lizard's favorite food and some have speculated that the incursion of the Argentine ant population — which has driven out native ant populations — has helped decrease Coast Horned Lizard numbers.

South County Plan

About 125 people came to Balboa Park June 29 to the presentation of the MSCP's 2010 Annual Report at its yearly public workshop. At the meeting the County honored Tom Oberbauer, who was instrumental in developing the MSCP and who retired from DPLU in December 2010. The workshop featured reports by several agencies about how MSCP land and biological habitat are being managed and how the species protected by the plan are being monitored. The groups included the San Diego County's MSCP group, Parks and Recreation Department, the cities of San Diego and Chula Vista, the U.S. Forest Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the San Diego Association of Governments.

North County Plan

The County is currently preparing the North County Plan's second draft environmental impact report and environmental impact study. DPLU anticipated it would be able to release the revised plan and its environmental documents for public comment this year, but the timeline has changed. The public can review the original draft plan, including its appendices and the public comments that were received when they were released for public review in early 2009, at: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/mscp/nc.html>.

East County Plan

Work on the East County Plan continues to be on hold. The work is intended to resume after completion of the North County Plan. Information about the draft East County Plan, including the preliminary draft preserve map, is available at: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/mscp/ec.html>.

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Code Enforcement

See More Code Enforcement [Success Stories!](#)

[March 2011: Tearing Down an Abandoned House in Spring Valley](#)

[Sept. 2010: Helping an Elderly Homeowner to Clean Violations](#)

[Aug. 2010: Working with a Fallbrook Owner to Clean up Construction Junk.](#)

[Aug. 2010: Working with a Vista Homeowner to Clear Away Junk.](#)

[June 2010: Working with a Property Owner in Ranchita to Clear a Scrap Yard](#)

[May 2010: Clearing a Public Health Hazard in Pala](#)

[April 2010: Cleaning and Securing an abandoned home in Spring Valley](#)

[March 2010: Removing an Illegal RV Storage Lot in Ramona](#)

[Jan. 2010: Cleaning up a foreclosure](#)

[Jan. 2010: Making a Neighborhood Safer](#)

[Dec. 2009: Tearing Down a Nuisance](#)

[Oct. 2009: Cleanup in La Mesa](#)

[March 2009: Debris Removal in Ramona](#)

Removing an Illegal Addition in El Cajon

Code Enforcement officers worked with a real estate office to remove a crude, unpermitted and potentially dangerous room addition from a foreclosed home in El Cajon in May after neighbors complained.



The addition clearly had not been built according to the County Building Code, which makes sure that buildings are constructed so that the people who rely on them are safe from numerous threats; including making sure they're structurally sound and won't collapse, to ensuring that electrical wiring is done correctly and won't create fire hazards. Together, Code Enforcement and the real estate office handling the home's mortgage were able to quickly remove the illegal addition and ensure the property was safe.



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